

DLA Seeks Job Skill Data from Employees

By Jessica Walter-Groft, DDC Command Affairs

With 1,800 employees eligible for retirement over the next three years at the Defense Distribution Center (DDC) alone, DLA is planning to capture information about the skills needed to perform DLA jobs in order to plan ahead and meet future requirements and the changing needs of the customer.

In the fall of 2004, DLA asked about 17,000 employees to complete an on-line skills assessment survey designed to compare the current skill level of the DLA workforce with the skill level perceived as appropriate by subject matter experts at DLA.

The Competency Assessment and Management Tool (CAMT) will be used throughout DLA to provide a record of skills required to perform various jobs and will also allow employees to identify the training they need to perform their positions at an optimal level.

Available over a secure website, the survey phase of the CAMT consists of a proficiency assessment in which the employee rates his or her qualifications against various functions of the position.

After the data is collected from the employees, DLA's contractor for this initiative, the Center for Naval Analyses Corporation, will compile the data to help DLA identify training needs across the agency.

"Your participation in this survey is critical. This information will show us where we need to help our workforce improve as we move forward," said former DDC Chief of Staff COL Michael Sullivan, USA.

In early 2005, the CAMT will be integrated with the Learning Management System, allowing employees and supervisors to more easily identify training needs, register for training opportunities, and prepare individual development plans.

Those DLA employees not included in the 17,000 asked to complete the initial survey will be invited to explore a demonstration of the CAMT website, and eventually all agency occupations will be included.

The Myth of the Silver Bullet

By Alan Peterson, DDJC Supervisory Distribution Facilities Specialist

How many times have you proposed solutions to problems only to hear "that's only a drop in the bucket," or "that barely scratches the surface of our problem?" We live in a world that wants quick, complete solutions to every concern, even while we recognize that those solutions are rarely available. We want a "silver bullet" to fix the whole problem in one symbolic shot.

We see the phrase "no silver bullet" more often than "silver bullet," but it is used in reference to our expectation that there should be a quick fix. Even at the national level, the White House uses both phrases. Unfortunately, identified silver bullets are often followed by retractions ("Oops, sorry. Of course there really is no silver bullet.") How do we come to this state, and how does it affect us? Perhaps more importantly, how does it affect the people with whom we work?

We learn to accept that many problems take complex answers. There are even problems that may not have a solution, at least based on what we presently know. We continue to work to find the solutions and look to the leading thinkers to give us better tools and methods to break down the biggest problems into manageable pieces. We then work to solve the pieces and combine them into a solution that resolves the larger problem. All of these are mature and reasoned approaches, and, in the back of our minds, we still believe there ought to be a winning lottery ticket of an answer—a silver bullet.

It is important that we make the effort to open communications and try to get everyone to a solution. Rallying the efforts of everyone concerned can go a long way

to a mutual understanding that the problem does not have a simple silver bullet answer and that everyone needs to be working toward a joint solution.

As we work our way into supervision and management, the problems and solutions will be presented to us as leaders and decision makers. It is here that we can show whether we learned any lessons from our predecessors. Whether the examples are positive or negative, the lessons are there to be learned. We will have the opportunity to avoid the "drop in a bucket" kind of comment that does not allow room for partial solutions, and we can open discussion to encourage cooperation and the joint efforts that will help to fill the figurative bucket.

Perhaps we need to focus on another of the uniquely American legends that influenced us as we grew up. Johnny Appleseed spent a lifetime making a difference in the Ohio River Valley by planting apple seedlings over hundreds of miles. He did it one seedling at a time and was the definition of long-term commitment. The fact that this was a real person named John Chapman is probably the important part of this role model. He was dealing with a real world that did not solve problems with a silver bullet. His world was the one that we live in and while his solution may have been straightforward, it required the type of long-term thinking and the expenditure of his best effort that we need to apply in our own efforts.

So, the next time you hear "that barely scratches the surface of the problem," don't think about the silver bullet that would make it all go away. Instead, think of the apple seed and John Chapman. Work to communicate the steps and the partial solutions that can combine with other efforts to resolve the entire problem. Bring your decision maker into the real world where buckets are filled one drop at a time.

And, there are no werewolves!

